

Negotiating Peace or Sustaining Conflict? A Critical Discourse Analysis of Indian and Pakistani Military Briefings during the 2025 Crisis

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ABSTRACT

The present research study critically analyzes the narratives of conflict, peace and national identity created by the military media briefings of Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) India and Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Pakistan during the 2025 Pahalgam crisis. Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model is used to analyze official press conferences and statements under the guidance of scholarly literature to determine textual choices, practices of discursivity, and socio-cultural ideologies in the briefings. The study is based on the purposive selection of the official state-authored statements and triangulation with pertinent scholarship. The discussion reveals that both states engaged in strategic ambiguity, which projected conditional peace with militarized rhetoric being maintained. India framed its appeals using legalistic and technocratic frames, but Pakistan preempted moral and humanitarian appeals. These counter-narratives ensured the reinforcement of enemy images, legitimate military action and reproduced underlying ideologies and power dynamics. The research contributes to the body of literature on conflict discourse, showing that official communication may become a discursive battlefield that continues the cycles of hostility and diminishes the discursive space of peace.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, military discourse, Indo-Pak conflict, Pahalgam crisis 2025, crisis communication, ideology and power.

INTRODUCTION

Language in modern political communication is far more than a neutral instrument of information; it is a powerful tool by which institutions form perception of the masses, shape social facts, and legitimize political action. Official discourse is very important particularly in times of geopolitical tension to frame events, take responsibility and mobilize national sentiment. Governments and military institutions tend to employ language which is highly designed to make their actions appear to be defensive, rational and legitimate and simultaneously portray the other party as aggressive or destabilising. In this sense, discourse is a strategic process in which the relationship of power and ideological stances are expressed and reinforced (Khalid et al., 2025).

Such discursive processes can be theoretically examined by referring to the works of critical thinkers like Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Norman Fairclough, and Teun A. van Dijk. According to these scholars, language can never be neutral but is always bound up with power and ideological structures. Discourse creates, institutionalizes, and perpetuates dominant narratives through institutions and societies. Of these

methods, the model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Fairclough (1995) offers one of the most systematic approaches to studying the functioning of language at the textual, discursive, and socio-cultural levels in order to create perceptions and reproduce power relations. In this context, institutional discourse like political speech, media discourse or official briefings becomes a crucial site to analyze the ways in which discourse constructs identities, legitimizes power, and negotiates ideological dominance.

The role of discourse is even more critical in interstate conflict situations. Military communication, particularly by official press releases, serves as a focal point around which states express themselves in times of crisis. These briefings do not only present information about the ongoing events but are also used to create the narratives of national identity, moral legitimacy and strategic restraint. Military spokespersons influence the perception of domestic and foreign audiences through lexical choices, modality, metaphor, and attributing agency to events. Consequently, military briefings turn into performative political texts which indicate wider ideological and strategic purposes (Noor et al., 2025).

The history of India-Pakistan rivalry provides a rather interesting background to the analysis of such discursive processes. The two nuclear-armed neighbours have witnessed repeated conflicts, diplomatic crises, and ongoing tensions since the time of the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, mostly focused on the unresolved Kashmir dispute (Saeed et al., 2025). These conflicts such as the Kargil War of 1999, the 2008 attacks on Mumbai, and the Pulwama-Balakot standoff of 2019 are not only fought by military means, but also by rival narratives that strive to find moral authority and international legitimacy. National narratives are therefore highly mobilized in media statements, diplomatic speeches and military briefings (Khalid et al., 2025).

The April-May 2025 crisis after the Pahalgam attack in Indian-administered Kashmir in which 26 civilians were killed represents one of the latest incidents in this long-standing conflict which sparked Indian military retaliation in the form of Operation Sindoor and the Pakistan reaction in the form of Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos and dragged the subcontinent close to the edge of a large-scale conflict once again. The attack triggered a series of political accusations, military responses, and diplomatic tensions between the two states (Haroon et al., 2025). India and Pakistan also carried out regular military media releases during this time using their respective institutional channels such as the ministry of external affairs in India and the Inter-Services Public Relations in Pakistan. These briefings were not only informational sources but discursive tactics that were intended to influence the sense of responsibility, legitimacy and restraint.

Although the framing of the media and the political rhetoric has been studied in the context of the Indo-Pak relations, comparatively little consideration has been paid to linguistic and discursive structures of the official military briefings themselves. These briefings are important sources of information on how states create discourses of conflict and peace, due to their institutional power and strategic influence in crises (Khalid et al., 2025). An examination of such discourse enables researchers to reveal the presence of ideological positions, power structures and political intentions in the institutional communication.

In this framework, this study uses the three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough to analyze military media briefings given by India and Pakistan in the 2025 crisis. The study will examine textual qualities and discursive operations and social-political contexts to uncover how the official discourse produces the national identity, the portrayal of the enemy, and the legitimacy of military intervention. In doing so, the study will lead to a better understanding of how language serves as a strategic tool in the modern conflict communication.

Accordingly, this research has been undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To explore how military media briefings in India and Pakistan construct national identity, enemy image, and justification of military actions during the 2025 conflict.
2. To identify how these discourses reflect underlying ideologies, power structures, and political intentions in the context of Indo-Pak relations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between discourse, ideology and power have been studied widely in the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), especially in political and conflict communication. According to scholars, discourse is not unbiased, but rather constitutes social realities, legitimizes practices, and creates national identities (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998). Discourse is very significant in the presentation of aggression, victimhood, and legitimacy narratives as in the case of the India-Pakistan conflict.

A key study conducted in Pakistan by Ashraf et al. (2022) aimed to analyze media representations during Indo-Pak conflicts. The aim of the research was to analyze the way in which national identity and enemy images are created through media discourse. Applying the Critical Discourse Analysis, the researchers examined the texts of the newspapers and discovered that Pakistani media often resorted to positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation strategies. The authors concluded that this discourse solidifies ideological differences and perpetuates conflict discourse. Similarly, a comparative study conducted in India and Pakistan by Wasim et al. (2023) explored political discourse during crisis situations. The aim was to examine the ways in which language is used by political actors to justify their actions. Using a qualitative CDA approach, the researchers analyzed political speeches and official statements. It was found that both states justified and framed their actions as self-defense, and presented the other state as the aggressor. This paper points out symmetry of discourse strategies employed by both countries.

Khan et al. (2020) conducted another important comparative study in South Asia that explored media framing of Indo-Pak conflicts. The aim was to find out the trends of securitization and nationalism in the media discourse. Through content analysis and CDA, the research discovered that the Indian and Pakistani media largely depend on nationalistic rhetoric and securitization strategies, which increase the tensions and restrict the avenues of peace-oriented discourse. In the Indian context, Yasmin (2024) conducted a study to analyze media narratives during Indo-Pak tensions. The aim was to investigate the construction of security threats and national identity in Indian media. Through the application of the Critical Discourse Analysis, the research found out that the Indian media discourse often presents Pakistan as a constant external threat with securitization and legitimization discourse. The results indicate that this type of discourse enhances domestic legitimacy of military action and ideological polarization.

Recent scholarship has been more concerned with general discourse building in international settings. For example, Latif et al. (2024) conducted a study examining how conflicts are represented in global media. The objective was to analyze the construction of “the other” in conflict discourse. Applying Critical Discourse Analysis, the researchers discovered that discourse is highly dependent on othering strategies, which delegitimize divergent actors. These results have a direct implication in the discourse of Indo-Pak conflicts, in which “othering” each other is a recurring trend. The most recent and relevant body of literature dwells upon the 2025 Pahalgam crisis that has enhanced the academic interest in discourse and conflict communication. In Pakistan, Haroon et al. (2025) sought to analyze diplomatic and military accounts of the crisis. The research, which involved a qualitative analysis of discourse, found that Pakistan established a discourse of victimhood, moral legitimacy, and restraint appeals, and portrayed itself as a responsible party in the conflict.

In contrast, Saeed et al. (2025), which was also carried out in Pakistan, examined Indian official statements during the crisis. The research was to examine Indian defense of military actions. The analysis of Indian discourse revealed that it relied on legalistic and technocratic style, which interpreted military actions as correct, necessary and counter-terrorist. This framing added to the establishment of legitimacy and the international acceptability. In addition, Noor et al. (2025) conducted a comparative analysis of media reports of the same crisis in Indo-Pak. This was aimed at narrative competition between the two states. Based on comparative CDA, the researchers came to the conclusion that both nations promoted peace-oriented rhetoric and militarized discourse at the same time, which led to a paradox of “conditional peace”. This dual approach is indicative of the role of discourse in intensifying and controlling conflict.

Despite these valuable contributions, a research gap is still evident. The majority of the current literature deals with media speech and political rhetoric, whereas little academic attention has been paid to official military briefings as the core of crisis communication. Military discourse, as noted in current studies, is a powerful voice of authority within the institutions and can influence both national and international senses of perception in times of conflicts. Therefore, this literature review demonstrates that although substantial work exists on Indo-Pak discourse, there is a need for a focused CDA of military briefings, particularly in the context of the 2025 Pahalgam crisis. This gap forms the basis of the current research and dictates the choice of the methodology and analytical framework.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) using Fairclough’s three-dimensional model, which examines discourse at the levels of textual analysis, discursive practice, and socio-cultural practice (Fairclough, 1995). A purposive sample of official media releases by the military during the April-May 2025 India-Pakistan episode has been taken from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) of Pakistan and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and defense communication of India. The analysis deals with the linguistic characteristics of lexical selection, modality, transitivity, and rhetorical framing to determine the ways in which national identity, legitimacy, and conflict are framed within the wider socio-political context of Indo-Pak relations.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

1. Textual Analysis

Constructing the Enemy – Conflict-Oriented Narratives

The first layer of the analysis demonstrates how both India and Pakistan deployed discursive strategies that actively constructed the “enemy image.” Indian briefings consistently characterized the Pahalgam attack as an act of “cross-border terrorism” carried out by “Pakistan-trained militants” (MEA, April 23, 2025). The use of words like “*savage attack*,” “*barbarity*,” and “*terrorist infrastructure*” (MEA, May 7, 2025) not only criticized the act but also sought to make Pakistan look like the direct facilitator of terrorism. Such rhetoric framing placed India in the position of a victim-state that had to protect itself, and its national identity as a responsible sovereign actor who was keeping its citizens safe. The military acts were also implicitly justified through such formulations, which suited the language of the international counterterrorism norms aligning with the response of India (Maryam et al., 2025; Yasmin, 2024).

Conversely, the ISPR made the opposite claim by terming the Indian strikes as “cowardly attacks” on “civilian infrastructure” and “places of worship” (ISPR, May 8, 2025). Such words like “*hubristic mindset*” and “*reckless escalation*” redefined India as an aggressor that threatened not only the peace of the region

but also of the world. With the interpretation of Indian activity as a deliberate desecration of the sanctity of civilians, ISPR invoked the discourse of humanitarian and provoked moral outrage at domestic level and sympathy at international level (Khalid et al., 2025). In this instance, India was being discursively transformed into the image of the enemy, though Pakistan was making its own mark of national identity as the state of peace and moral values.

This dichotomization is a reflection of the concept of the “ideological square”, as van Dijk (1998) describes: each of the sides exaggerated the negative qualities of the other, and focused on the positive aspects about itself. India was dependent on the bureaucratic and legalistic registers, where terminology like the “*measured responses*” and “*non-escalatory actions*” (MEA, May 8, 2025) served as the euphemisms to legitimize military violence (Fairclough, 1995). Pakistan, on the contrary, used the sacralized language such as “*martyrs*,” “*befitting reply*,” and “*swift retribution*” (DG ISPR, May 11, 2025), which entails military action in the context of the religious and cultural terms (Naqeeb et al., 2025). In this way, India justified its actions by legality and precision, whereas Pakistan justified its position by morality and religious duty.

Projecting Peace and Responsibility

In addition to enemy construction, rhetoric of responsibility was utilized by both parties to project themselves as peace seekers. The MEA frequently highlighted India’s “commitment to non-escalation, provided Pakistan respects the same” (MEA, May 9, 2025). This conditional framing made India sound rational and restrained but also brought out certain political intention towards placing the burden of escalation on Pakistan. These rhetorical elements can be categorized into functions of framing suggested by Entman (1993) who identified the problem (terrorism), causal attribution (Pakistan) and adjusted them to a moral judgment of India as right and a solution of self-restrained military action.

Similarly, ISPR described war between the two states as “sheer stupidity” and declared that “there is no space for war between India and Pakistan” (ISPR, May 11, 2025). However, these statements were immediately followed by threats of “swift and brutal retribution” if provoked. This juxtaposition example is what Gul and Anwar (2025) define as strategic ambiguity: the presentation of peace-focused rhetoric to the external audience, and the maintenance of deterrent credibility domestically. This rhetoric of Pakistan therefore supported its national ideals of being a peace-loving nation, and at the same time justified its defensive posture of being a necessity.

Both discourses are examples of the paradox of South Asian military discourse, in which the rhetoric of peace is not a real de-escalatory approach, but a conditional discourse aimed at justifying the existing power structures of militarization (Yasmin, 2024; Haroon et al., 2025).

Strategic Ambiguity in Textual Choices

There is strategic ambiguity in the syntactic and lexical forms of the Indian and Pakistani briefings. India resorted to passive constructions like “targets were neutralized” and “terrorist infrastructure degraded” (MEA, May 7, 2025), which obscure human cost and agency and thus is consistent with the observation of Fairclough (1995) that nominalization and passive voice depersonalize violence. Pakistan, in turn, juxtaposed categorical statements of readiness (“we will never bow down to Indian hegemony”) with appeals to international law and humanitarian norms (“our religion does not allow us [to target civilians]”) (DG ISPR, May 11, 2025). Pakistan briefings have made it clear that India was the offender of international law of peace and war. It is this ambiguity that brings out the role of the underlying ideologies in influencing discourse India toward the technocratic and rules-based order and Pakistan toward moral and religious legitimacy. The duality maintains a paradox of restraint and aggression that supports the relations of power

between the states. Strategically ambiguity in practice is a performative device, which conceals and legitimizes a course of action, so that enemy images are delegitimized and self-representations of sovereign national identity and long-term political intentions are strengthened. Such militarized rhetoric, as Maryam et al. (2025) claim, serves as a performative apparatus that, in addition to reporting military action, moralizes and integrates it into the national identity (p. 3435).

2. Discursive Practice

Framing Peace and War through Media Circulation

Military briefings produced and circulated in May 2025 are an example of discourse being mediated to both the domestic and international audiences. Indian spokespersons framed military action as “measured, precise, and non-escalatory” (MEA, May 8, 2025), stressing professionalism and legality. The staging of press briefings complete with satellite imagery, maps of “terrorist infrastructure,” and technical terminology such as “*neutralisation*” and “*air defense system degraded*” created what Kress and van Leeuwen (2020) call a “visual grammar of authority.” This multimodal performance put India in rational and scientifically accurate stand, which enhanced its national identity as a responsible state and also provided justification of military acts to international audience (cf. Fairclough, 1995).

Comparatively, ISPR briefings in Pakistan were multimodal, both in terms of professional military communication and emotional appeal. The claims like “India attacked places of worship and killed innocent civilians including women and children” (ISPR, May 8, 2025) were backed with images of funerals and destroyed infrastructure. This circulation discourse made India a reckless aggressor, which justified its actions and reinforced the sense of national identity of Pakistan as a victim and yet a powerful nation (Khalid et al., 2025). The rationalisation of military interventions in this instance was more on the basis of morality and humanitarian indignation rather than legality.

The patterns of circulation in both examples suggest some ideologies in action: India is more concerned with the idea of the sovereignty and counterterrorism, and Pakistan with the notion of the religious morality and victimhood. The media thus became a focal point where the official discourses were not merely reported but turned into the competing truth-claims (Haroon et al., 2025; Janjua, 2025).

Conditional De-escalation and Strategic Messaging

Both sides employed conditional peace rhetoric, a form of discursivity. Indian officials reiterated many times that “commitment to non-escalation” would be applied only on the condition of reciprocity by Pakistan (MEA, May 9, 2025). In the similar way, Pakistan framed war as “sheer stupidity” but accompanied this with categorical expressions like “our retribution will be swift and brutal” in case of provocation (DG ISPR, May 11, 2025).

Such dual communication depicts what Gul and Anwar (2025) define as *strategic ambiguity*: on the one hand, sending peace-seeking maturity internationally and on the other hand, keeping the credibility of deterrence domestically. By doing so, both states strengthened their national identity as peace-seeking, but powerful states and created the image of the opponent as the person of an enemy who came to bring the instability. Such discursive practices legitimized military power and inculcated responses in the ideologies of deterrence and security at subconscious levels. They also underscore the political agenda of the two states to remain legitimate at home and show restraint abroad. Conditional de-escalation also demonstrates the wider tendencies found in the work of Yasmin (2024) on South Asian militarism, in which the concept of peace is not a value in itself, it is one of the strategic alternatives integrated into deterrence logic.

Claims to legitimacy were further advanced by the propagation of such conditional peace messages in international media. India's assertion that it had targeted "only terrorist camps" (MEA, May 7, 2025) was picked up by outlets such as *Reuters* and *BBC*, while Pakistan's claim that India had "deliberately attacked mosques and killed civilians" (ISPR, May 8, 2025) circulated widely in *Al Jazeera* and *The Express Tribune*. Such competing narratives, thus, revealed the power structures working in media ecosystems, in which truth-claims were mobilized to influence how international opinion and serve national political agendas. Competing truth-claims thus got disseminated in media ecosystems, which characterized how international actors understood escalation.

Narrative Competition and Intertextuality

During the 2025 Indo-Pak crisis, intertextual contestation was a characteristic of discursive practice. Past events were appropriated and reframed by both states to legitimize current positions. India connected the Pahalgam attack to "the same terrorist infrastructure responsible for Mumbai 2008 [coordinated attacks by Lashkar-e-Taiba that killed over 170 people] and Pathankot 2016 [cross-border militant assault on an Indian airbase]" (MEA, May 8, 2025), situating its retaliation within a continuum of anti-terror operations. Meanwhile, Pakistan drew parallels with "false flag" operations such as Pulwama 2019 [suicide bombing killing 40 Indian paramilitary troops in Kashmir, blamed on Jaish-e-Mohammed] and Chittisinghpura 2000 [massacre of 35 Sikh-villagers in Kashmir during President Clinton's India visit, later alleged by some to be a staged incident], arguing that India had a record of fabricating incidents for political gain (ISPR, May 9, 2025).

This intertextual tactic is typical of van Dijk's (1998) *ideological square*: each state emphasized the "bad actions" of the other, and anticipated its own restraint and victimization. By doing so, India tried to build its national identity of a responsible counterterrorism actor, whereas Pakistan tried to build its national identity of a principled state revealing the manipulations of India. States simultaneously constructed enemy images of each other and established their claims as a justification of military actions within larger security and moral contexts. These practices reveal the hidden ideologies of sovereignty, legitimacy and deterrence as well as gives the reflection into the political intentions of each state to position itself as the legitimate actor in the power dynamics in South Asia. Moreover, by invoking international analogies India comparing Pakistan to "the epicenter of global terrorism" (MEA, May 8, 2025), and Pakistan likening itself to Afghanistan resisting U.S. coercion [reference to the Taliban-led insurgency that ultimately forced the U.S. withdrawal after two decades of war] (DG ISPR, May 2025) both militaries placed the bilateral conflict within broader geopolitical narratives. This not only legitimized their claims but also attempted to mobilize consumers across the globe by installing the crisis within the global scripts which are familiar. The Intertextual layering of the past conflicts and the world comparisons illustrates the fact that the military briefings are not the speech events but the points on a broader battlefield of discourse. As Janjua (2025) explains, this type of narrative competition allows both sides to possess the truth and demonize the other, thus extending a conflict discourse cycle.

3. Socio-Cultural Practice

National Identity and Power in Discourse

At the socio-cultural level, the 2025 briefings disclose how official discourse in India and Pakistan re-established the national identity and power relations in their ideological paradigms. India projected itself as a responsible, sovereign democracy combating terrorism, using formulations such as "*India's right to respond in self-defense*" (MEA, May 8, 2025) and "*commitment to non-escalation, provided Pakistan reciprocates*" (MEA, May 9, 2025). Holding on proportionality, legality, and restraint, India shaped its

image of the global peace-loving state according to the international standards. These discursive selections not only explicitly bring out the self-justification of India, but also act as justification of the army actions, indicating how its counter-terror efforts were entrenched in larger power requirements of international law and security. This is in line with Shah (2025) observation that the Indian strategic discourse tends to use legalistic frames to build legitimacy in international circles.

In contrast, Pakistan actually organized a discourse of sacralized nationalism and moral superiority. ISPR's declarations that "*our religion does not allow us to target civilians*" and "*we are a peace-loving nation*" (DG ISPR, May 11, 2025) positioned Pakistan as morally principled in contrast to India's alleged "hubristic mindset" and "cowardly attacks" (DG ISPR, May 8, 2025). These appeals, as (Naqeeb et al. (2025) explain, do not only bring domestic audiences together but also make the identity of Pakistan aligned to general Islamic and humanitarian ideals and place the struggle in a transnational ethical context. The discourse of Pakistan in this case is the strengthening of its nation identity and the building of an image of an enemy, India, making its discourse entrenched in the implicit ideological frameworks of moral legitimacy and resistance.

In both the discourse sustained a binary of good-self and evil-other and perpetuated hostile identities that transcend the battle ground and penetrate the culture of sovereignty, martyrdom, and resilience (van Dijk, 1998; Maryam et al., 2025). This dichotomy demonstrates the expression of conflicting political will India to legitimize the sovereignty and counterterrorism, Pakistan to legitimize the parity and moral elevation supporting regional power systems in the end. Paradigms of ideology, Militarization, and Security.

Ideology, Militarization, and Security Paradigms

The ideological dimension of both discourses reflects the persistence of militarized worldviews in South Asia. The ideological aspect of both discourses shows continuity of militarized worldviews in South Asia. India demands surgical precision, deterrence, and counterterrorism operations, which are in line with its developing doctrine of proactive defense (Singh, 2024; Fair, 2014). These discursive decisions justify violence by placing it in a technocratic and rule-paradigm. The constant appeal to legality and proportionality provides an illusion of rationality and imperative to Indian militarization, entrenching a set of underlying ideologies of sovereign claims and national security (Entman, 1993; Reyes, 2011).

On the contrary, the ideology of Pakistan is a combination of religiosity and deterrence. Such statements as "retribution will be swift and brutal" and allusions of Kashmir as an "unfinished business of partition" (DG ISPR, May 11, 2025) raise military defense to the level of moral obligation. This overlap of faith and security discourse sacralizes the process of retaliation, and strengthens the Pakistani self-conception of being a protector of justice and resistance (Maryam et al., 2025). According to Gul and Anwar (2025), such strategic ambiguity between peace and war preparedness is an indication of a measured trade-off between deterrence and diplomacy.

The militarized discourses of both nations, then, serve an ideological purpose: to naturalize violence as lawful and even natural. Militarization is either moralized (Pakistan) or bureaucratized (India), through language. In both instances, military preparedness is framed as a moral necessity a type of communicative power that authenticates the sovereignty of the state and invalidates the claims of the opponent (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008).

Comparative Insights and Broader Implications

A comparative analysis of Indian and Pakistani discourse shows convergence and divergence. Both countries depend on an extensive use of strategic ambiguity, which is a blend of peace and deterrence to maintain what Ezaan et al. (2025) term as a “paradoxical peace environment”.

However, their justificatory frameworks diverge sharply; India justified its action by incorporating it into the language of the international law (self-defense, proportionality, non-escalation). This demonstrates a deeper undertakes ideologies of sovereignty and international responsibility, and strengthening dominance by making recourse to international law. Pakistan justified the position taking the religious, humanitarian, and cultural values into consideration, and tied peace to the unresolved Kashmir issue. This showed political motives of putting India in a position of aggressor and maintaining its own national characterization as a state of principle, and in the process, forming an image of an enemy of India.

These disparities represent more general ideological gaps: India previews sovereignty and combatants terrorism inside a global lawful framework, whereas Pakistan focuses on self-determination, parity, and moral obligation (Prayogo & Sari, 2025).

The consequences are not only limited to South Asia. Militarized rhetoric in the world, as Latif et al. (2024) observe in their discussion of Russian rhetoric about Ukraine, works as an ideological machine that produces legitimacy, maintains hostilities, and blocks other options besides militarism (Richardson & Milani, 2024). Invoking peace and deterrence simultaneously in the case of Indo-Pakistani creates an environment of hostility instead of defusing it by establishing what Khalid et al. (2025) call a discursive battlefield that resembles the military one. This demonstrates how power dynamics and latent ideologies in discourse of conflict are not limited to bilateral politics, but carry political will in narratives of global legitimacy and security.

CONCLUSION

This study has evaluated the role played by language in the military media briefing presented by India and Pakistan during the 2025 Pahalgam crisis to construct national identity, characterize the enemy, and legitimize military action. It also discussed how these official statements unveiled the political ideologies and power relations that still persist in the Indo-Pak relations. Based on Fairclough three dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, the study discovered that official discourse is a potent instrument that both of the states establish a sense of legitimacy, safeguard authority and uphold conflicting self/other images.

On the language level, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) employed by India and the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) employed by Pakistan pursued their national image based on some words, some grammatical patterns, and certain assertions of assurance. India was briefing in a strict and legal way, making the country sound as a disciplined and responsible democracy that is operating in the law of the international law. The use of terms like measured, accurate, and legitimate response formed the image of a rational actor defending its sovereignty. Pakistan, however, applied moral and religious tone to characterize itself as peace-loving but brave. Expressions like martyr, moral strength and defensive action assisted to create an image of such a position of Easter, humane and faithful Pakistan and an image of aggressor India. Each side spoke positively of themselves and negatively about the other, thus establishing a sharp contrast between us and them.

Justification of armed action emerged to be a significant objective of both sets of briefings. The authorities in India cast military actions as right and legal, with such passive sentences like targets were neutralised

that conceal human actions and make the use of violence objective. Pakistan defended its acts as a moral imperative of defending the country by the use of words such as proper and befitting response to demonstrate that retaliation was a responsible action and not an act of aggression. Therefore, both nations deployed language to make violence an act of responsibility India by the means of legality and Pakistan by the means of morality.

At the communication level, both governments dictated the release and interpretation of information. The briefings were designed for two audiences: domestic readers, who were expected to show unity, and international observers, who judge legitimacy. The discourse of India attributed its efforts to the global war on terrorism, which appealed to the Western powers and international organisations. The discourse of Pakistan was based on internal unity, and compassion of other Muslim and humanitarian viewers. These choices demonstrate how language was used for political aims to build internal confidence and to claim legitimacy at the global level.

At the broader social level, both discourses reflected long-standing ideologies of nationalism and militarism. Formal, legal Indian style refers to the wish to be viewed as a responsible world force, whereas moral and faith-based Pakistani style is associated with the very creation of being a protector of justice and religion. The two discourses reinforced the ancient antagonisms, rather than subverting them. These were usually conditional sentences such as in case provoked or in exchange made peace seem provisional and unpredictable, yet both parties were talking about peace. So, language of peace was a language of threat as well. The presence of peace and warning indicates how both the nations still consider dialogue an extension of conflict.

This comparison analysis reveals that military communication in South Asia is not just newsit but is a component of the ongoing political struggle. By means of some patterns of wording and sentence structure, official rhetoric transforms military practices into right, and even honourable practices. It normalizes the confrontation within the ideas of national pride, duty and law. Theoretically, this research demonstrates how Fairclough's three levels of analysis text, discourse practice, and social context work together to reveal how everyday language upholds ideology and power. In practice it reminds us of the importance of analyzing state discourse closely, as how governments discourse about conflict creates a strong influence on public opinion and foreign policy. To sum up, the Indian and Pakistani military briefings about the crisis of 2025 in Pahalgam not just defined reality but created it. Both states justified their actions with legal, moral and patriotic terminology and reinforced their sense of distinctions. These official writings justified militarisation as being normal and necessary. This kind of discourse should be challenged if the South Asians are to be taken into a more peaceful and cooperative future.

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